

Pittsburgh School District Principal Incentive Program

The Pittsburgh Public School (PPS) system has instituted reforms that include the establishment of eight Accelerated Learning Academies (ALAs), a Leadership Academy for principals, and other initiatives, including consolidating underutilized schools. Pittsburgh's Principal Incentive Program will evaluate principals on gains in student achievement and their leadership responsibilities. All principals will be eligible for the incentive program, including principals of ALAs who are already serving under performance-based contracts.

Needs Assessment Results and General Information

PPS, an urban school district and Pennsylvania's second largest, serves more than 29,000 students in 65 schools. Sixty percent of the students are black; 37 percent are white; 2 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander; and less than 2 percent are Hispanic or Native American. Sixty-percent of the district's children are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and all but one of the schools is high need. Achievement in the PPS often falls along racial and economic lines. However, some schools with high numbers of disadvantaged students performed well on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). Graduation and attendance rates in the PPS are below that of the average for the state, with a 64 percent graduation rate compared to 74 percent for the state.

Background

PPS has taken steps to address excess capacity by closing underutilized schools, and this has promoted a climate of readiness for reform.

In addition, the PPS developed Excellence for All, a 4-year comprehensive agenda with the goals of raising

student achievement and reducing the racial and economic gaps in achievement. Excellence for All commits the district to a plan for reform that includes leadership training for principals and teachers, holding staff accountable for students, and creating incentives for principals to raise school achievement. As part of the reform efforts, eight schools were converted to ALAs, which have an extended school day and a greater focus on core subjects. Principals of ALAs are on performance-based contracts and are eligible for \$10,000 in performance incentives. Principals develop School Plans for Excellence (SPEs) that identify and describe goals for meeting Excellence for All objectives. As part of the reform efforts, the Board of Education established the Leadership Academy, an instructional leadership program for principals and assistant principals to train them to meet Excellence for All objectives.

Incentives

All of the PPS principals will have the opportunity to participate in the incentive program. Principals of the ALAs are also eligible for participation, which would provide them with an extra incentive. The PPS program has three components: an achievement bonus of up to

LOCATION(S)	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
GRANT AMOUNT	Year 1: \$1,472,016 5-year total: \$7,412,783
DURATION	5 years
PARTNERS	RAND Corporation, Institute for Learning, Educational Testing Service

\$8,000 annually based on student achievement in the principals' schools, (2) a bonus of up to \$2,000 annually based on level of completion of the SPE action steps, and (3) an increment of up to \$2,000 annually based on mastery of best practice as identified in the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards and on evidence that leadership responsibilities have been fulfilled. The school system and RAND Corporation will determine the incentives for prorated incentives.

Evaluation

PPS will use RAND Corporation, an external evaluator, to assess the implementation and effectiveness of the compensation plan.

RAND will conduct formative and summative evaluations. RAND will also measure changes in principal behavior and gains in student achievement and prepare written reports quarterly, documenting progress toward desired outcomes, to ensure continuous feedback.

Resources

In each year of the grant, the district will allocate funds from the general operating budget to cover an increasing share of the funds for principal performance incentives. By the project's fifth year, the district will cover 75 percent of the cost of the incentives.

Data Systems

PPS has a comprehensive, web-based password-protected online student information system called Real Time Information (RTI). The system collects information on student achievement and attainment of academic targets. Additional functionality will be built to enable the system to calculate the appropriate bonuses and/or increment based on (1) the level of each school's student achievement gains and attainment

of Academic Targets set in its SPE, (2) a principal's level of completion of the SPE action steps, and (3) a principal's mastery of best practices identified in the ISLLC Standards and their successful fulfillment of the additional leadership responsibilities..

Year 1 Activities

During its initial year of implementing the Federal TIF grant, the Pittsburgh Public Schools has made significant progress as indicated by the District's ability to enhance professional development opportunities for all of its 67 principals. The District believes that this training has assisted the principals in implementing effective leadership skills. Additional progress can be attributed to the District's use of a more comprehensive evaluation tool that has more accurately measured evidence of principals' leadership practices and the impact that these practices have on student achievement. As a result of implementing the above evaluation system, the District is able to use the information obtained from the evaluation to assist it in making first-year performance payouts and counts this as a success.

In regard to the challenges experienced by the District, PPS found that applying the District's initial plan for measuring achievement to administrators of special schools was difficult. District administrators soon realized that the criteria established for measuring gains of typical student populations was ineffective in assessing the gains of students with profound disabilities. As a result of this discovery, administrators of the six district special schools were unable to participate in the portion of the incentive plan that measured achievement. In an attempt to identify possible solutions to this challenge, PPS utilized the assistance of the CECR technical assistance team.

Outlook for Year 2

As much attention during the first year was devoted toward identifying strategies that would allow principals of special schools to be eligible for achievement bonuses, one of the District's primary goals for year 2 will be to implement strategies that assist the District in measuring achievement among the special schools students and that allow for principals of these schools to be eligible for the achievement bonus.

Additionally, the District will include as part of its second year goals the strategy of improving communications between the District and its stakeholders. As part of its enhanced communications strategy, the District will develop Talking Points for principals and other District administrators that assist them in responding to both media and parent inquiries related to the incentive and bonus payouts.